

**Ofwat PC report:  
Working with  
catchment partners to  
improve natural  
capital**



**Wessex Water**  
YTL GROUP

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# Working with catchment partners to improve natural capital

## 1 Executive Summary

Wessex Water has undertaken work with catchment partners to improve natural capital in AMP7 (2020-2025). Projects delivered are monitored through the Performance Commitment PR19WSX\_E7 Working with catchment partners to improve natural capital (E7). This report covers project delivery information spanning 2020-2023 to evaluate the benefits derived.

The purpose of this report is to satisfy the Ofwat requirement to evaluate the natural capital benefits delivered across the Wessex Water region as part of this Performance Commitment (PC). This is a requirement once during AMP7 (2020-25) as detailed below:

*The company will at least once during the five-year period publish a report to assess the benefits resulting from the performance commitment, as far as possible based on primary evidence.*

The aim of this Evaluation Report is to:

- fulfil Wessex Water's statutory requirement to report on and demonstrate the benefits of regional partnership working for the E7 Performance Commitment (PC) to Ofwat and the Catchment Panel.
- present and explain measurable reported metrics for the enhancement of regional water environments and wider benefits of building a robust network for nature through partnership working and public engagement. This report includes data analysis of natural capital metrics presented by the projects and case studies written through conversation and interviews with relevant partners to demonstrate the actions and outcomes of work undertaken.
- explore how partnership work supported/facilitated directly and indirectly by Wessex Water helps to improve natural capital within the region.
- understand the importance of Wessex Water's continuous support of partners and collaborative work for improved natural capital, regional water environments, and human connection to nature.

This report has been prepared as a culmination of partner conversations and interviews, reported projects and metrics, public-facing media including short films, regulatory influence and drivers, and public opinion-driven investment. A second report: E7 Performance Commitment Project Summary Report has also been produced providing greater explanation and detail on the individual projects supported and progress made between 2020 and 2023. The primary data has been provided by the partners delivering these projects rather than through this evaluation exercise.

Whilst highlighting tangible, measurable metrics, this report also simultaneously seeks to explore and understand the wider holistic benefits and outcomes of working in partnership across the Wessex region. This includes:

- regional relationship building for wider access and securing of funding and achievement for natural capital improvement work
- the social benefits of supporting volunteer engagement

- the positive outcomes of facilitating accessible environmental activity and outdoor time in the name of environmental education and wellbeing
- anecdotal information from volunteers and Partners

This PC covers the following range of partnership projects which have been grouped into the five key themes illustrated in Figure 1 - Project categories covered by this Performance Commitment, below.

Figure 1 - Project categories covered by this Performance Commitment



## 1.1 Funding and Metrics Overview

This section provides an overview of the five key partnership strands of this PC, level of funding provided by Wessex Water and the natural capital metrics used to assess project delivery and success.

### 1.1.1 Wessex Water Catchment Management and Delivery

Wessex Water employs teams dedicated to protecting and optimising ground and surface water sources from environmental contaminants such as nitrate, phosphorus and pesticides. This is achieved through a risk-based approach analysing catchment health and engaging farmers and land managers to deliver appropriate interventions. The approach is primarily targeted to improve raw water quality, but the interventions deliver wider benefits for the environment, such as improved biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

The Raw Water Performance Team works in drinking water catchments to minimise contamination of raw water to reduce the need for additional treatment. Where appropriate, farmers may be signposted to resources such as Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) measures. The Raw Water Performance Team (RWPT) also monitor the condition and performance of the abstraction assets including boreholes, wells, and springs, through regular testing and monitoring programmes. The Catchment Delivery Team (CDT) are concerned with reducing excess nutrients from agricultural

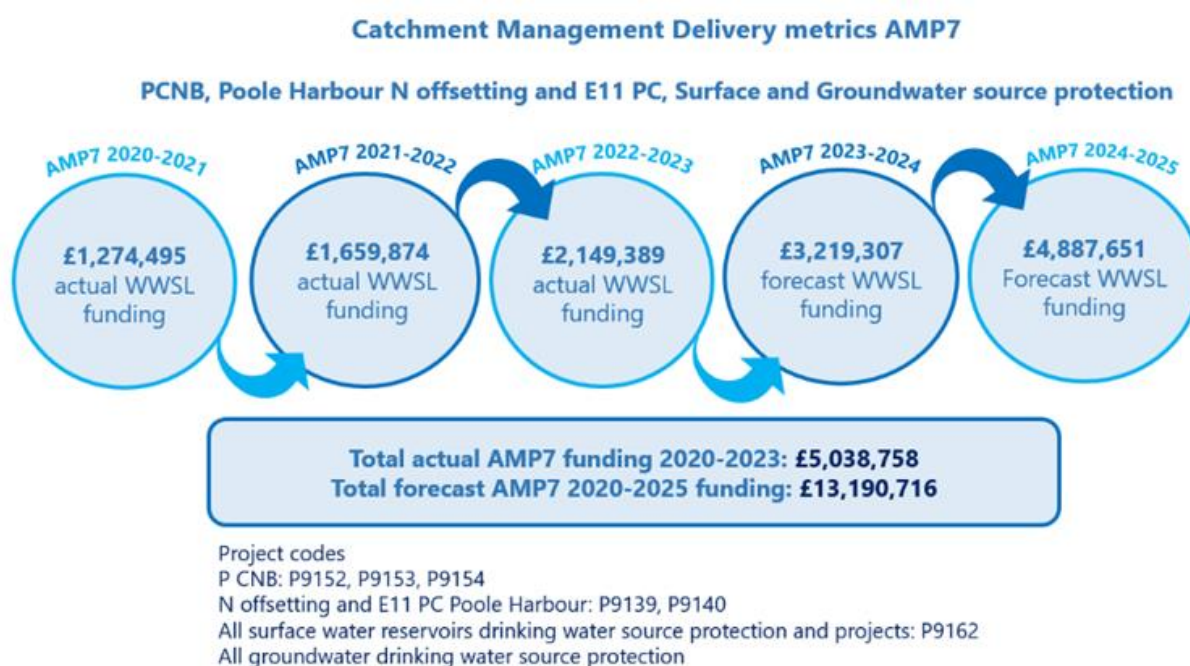
activity entering watercourses, helping to reduce the need for additional treatment at Wessex Water's Water Recycling Centres (WRCs).

A total of 29 catchment management projects contribute towards this PC, covering 8 Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) funded projects in AMP7 and 21 Non-WINEP projects. The WINEP projects are new catchments where water quality risks have been identified prior to 2020 and the preferred approach is to implement catchment interventions rather than asset interventions. The 21 Non-WINEP projects are continuation projects where the water quality risk has been identified in previous AMP periods and interventions are successfully managing risks.

Catchment advisers provide advice to land managers to enable them to undertake interventions themselves, funded by Wessex Water, to reduce impacts on the water environment. In addition, advisers will deliver appropriate monitoring programmes to evaluate the success of the interventions deployed and implications for continued risk. Wessex Water does not deliver these interventions but supports land managers to implement.

A financial summary is provided in Figure 2 - Financial Summary of Catchment Management Project types included, highlighting the expenditure at time of writing, covering the WINEP and Non-WINEP projects.

Figure 2 - Financial Summary of Catchment Management Project types included



The following environmental outputs have been delivered to date via this strand:

- 56,000 trees planted covering a land area of approximately 120,000m<sup>2</sup>
- Over 3km of hedgerows planted
- Engaged with more than 190 land managers
- Influenced active catchment management across 300,000ha (3% of our region)
- Achieved over 80 tonnes of nitrogen reduction and 2 tonnes of phosphorus reduction
- Delivered over 7ha of terrestrial biodiversity improvements

Tangible, quantifiable metrics are reported on through annual groundwater and surface water reports, but it is important to reflect on the immeasurable benefits of partnership working in this way.



### 1.1.2 Wessex Water BAP Partners Programme

Wessex Water was the first water company to publish a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in 1998, in response to the Rio Earth Summit recognising global decline in biodiversity. The BAP has been reviewed and updated over the last 25 years, but a key component has been supporting the delivery of partnership projects across the region to improve biodiversity beyond our landholding.



In AMP7, the Wessex Water Biodiversity Action Plan Partners Programme comprised four major projects:

- A Better Biss Approach (ABBA) led by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
- Dorset Wild Rivers (DWR) led by Dorset Wildlife Trust
- Wider Wylfe led by Wessex Rivers Trust and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
- Wilder Waterways led by Bristol Avon Rivers Trust and Avon Wildlife Trust

Wessex Water's Biodiversity Action Plan<sup>1</sup> published in Spring 2023 details Wessex Water's duties, commitments and targets for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity across the region, identifying opportunities and action to improve nature's recovery. The plan serves as a reflective strategy for how our business operations impact the environment. It outlines the necessity to undertake work in partnership across the region for best outcomes across as wide a reach as possible. The BAP Partners Programme is managed through Wessex Water's Solutions Team, overseen by an Independent Chair, funding four key projects.

Projects within the BAP Partners Programme receive continuous annual funding from Wessex Water to achieve a range of natural capital improvements and wider community engagement tailored to their respective regions and local environments. The funding levels are detailed below in Figure 3 - BAP Partners Programme project funding.

Figure 3 - BAP Partners Programme project funding

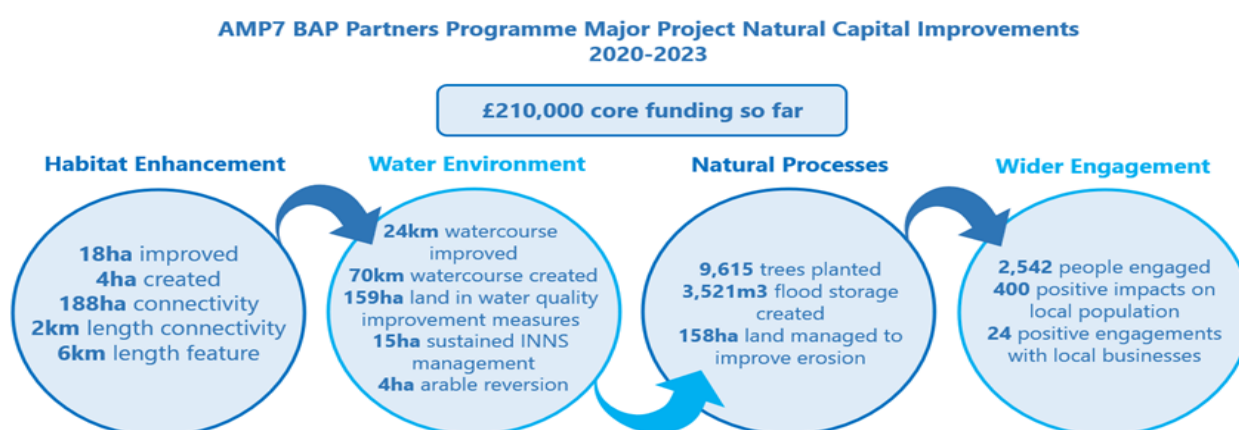
 BAP Partners Programme	Annual Funding	Total AMP7 2020-2025
A Better Biss Approach	£20,000	£100,000
Dorset Wild Rivers	£20,000	£100,000
Wider Wylfe 	£15,000	£75,000
Wilder Waterways	£15,000	£75,000
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>£70,000</b>	<b>£350,000</b> 

Tangible, quantifiable metrics are reported annually to Wessex Water and to regional Catchment Partnerships via annual Catchment Based Approach (CaBA)<sup>2</sup> data returns and are illustrated in Figure 4 - Natural capital benefits reported by BAP Partners Programme Projects. This reflects the funding and natural capital benefits from April 2020 to March 2023.

<sup>1</sup> [Biodiversity Action Plan \(wessexwater.co.uk\)](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk)

<sup>2</sup> *Catchment Based Approach (CaBA)*, [Home - CaBA \(catchmentbasedapproach.org\)](https://www.catchmentbasedapproach.org)

Figure 4 - Natural capital benefits reported by BAP Partners Programme Projects

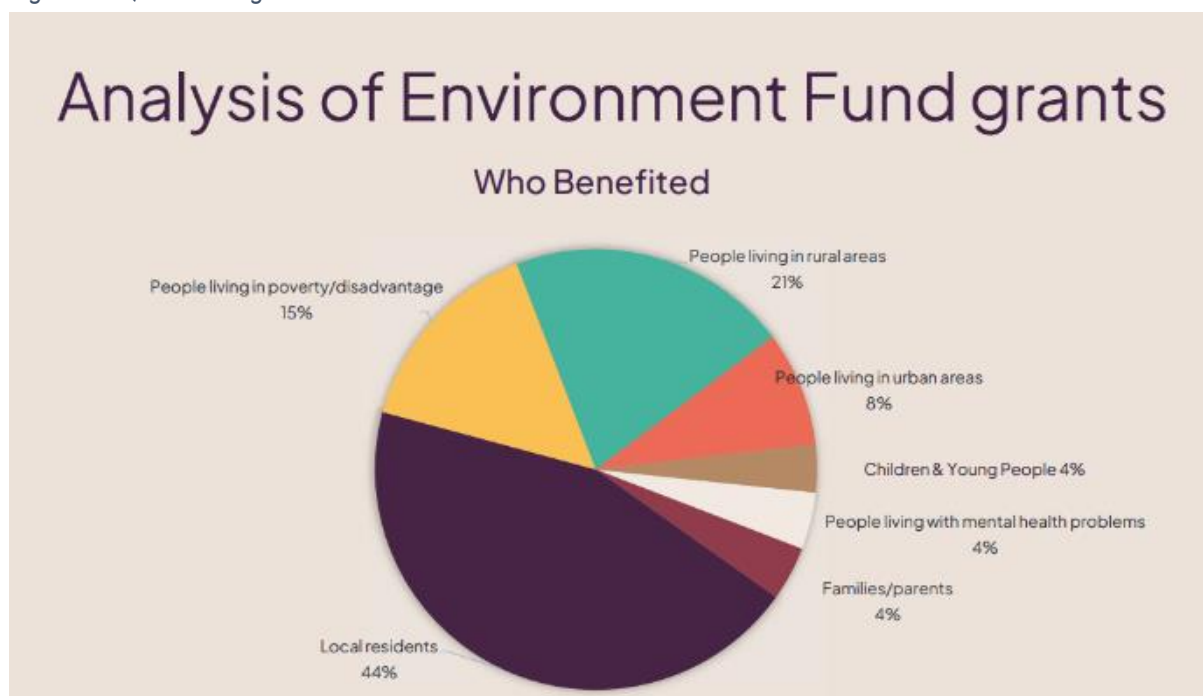


### 1.1.3 Wessex Water Foundation: Environment Fund

The Wessex Water BAP Small Grants fund was amalgamated into the Wessex Water Foundation in the first year of AMP7 (2020-2021) during the COVID19 pandemic.

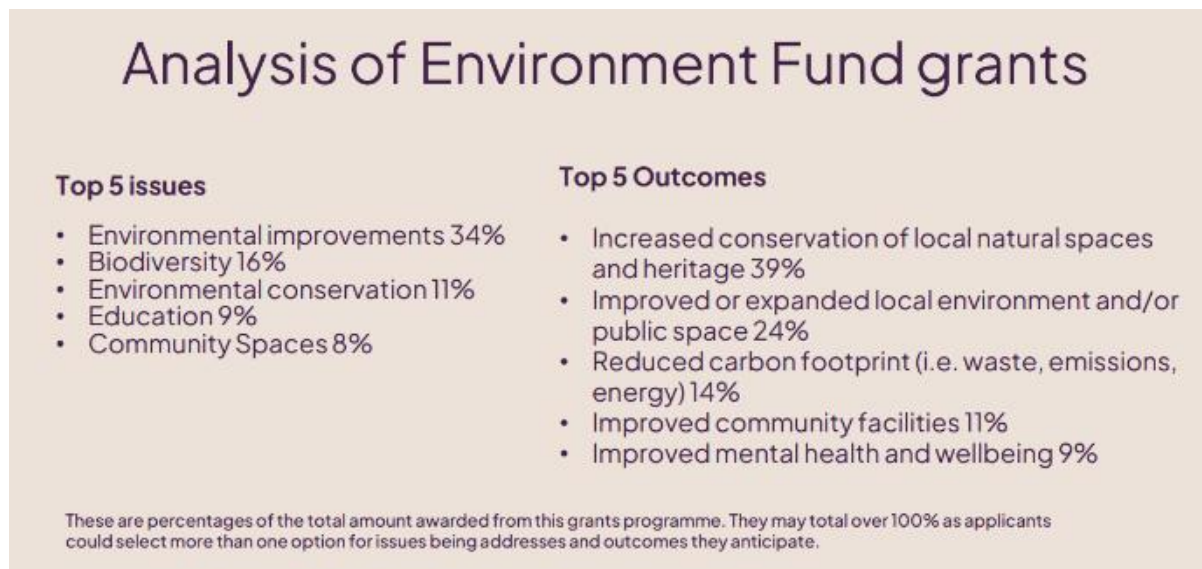
The Environment Fund has facilitated the undertaking of 169 public environmental projects between 2021-2024 with a total of £930,885, all seeking to save water, help the local environment, support wellbeing, and enhance natural capital and biodiversity. Figure 5 - Quartet categorisation of Environment Fund beneficiaries and Figure 6 - Quartet analysis of Environment Fund grants below, shows the independent analysis by Quartet of project benefits as facilitated by the Wessex Water Foundation 2022-2023.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 5 - Quartet categorisation of Environment Fund beneficiaries



<sup>3</sup> Quartet Community Foundation report on the Wessex Water Foundation, 2023, [Wessex Water Foundation report 2022.23](#)

Figure 6 - Quartet analysis of Environment Fund grants



The Environment Fund projects have been excluded from this PC but referenced in this report for completeness. This was a change to the PC Methodology following the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the number of projects supported is not reported in the total for this PC and typically the projects are below the funding threshold required of this PC as described within the Methodology. Similarly, any natural capital gains delivered through these community projects are not included in this PC or detailed further in this report.

### 1.1.4 Catchment Partnerships

Wessex Water funds regional Catchment Partnerships to secure coordinator time and ongoing resource for natural capital improvements. Regional Catchment Partnerships facilitate multi-agency collaboration, partnership projects, and informed, coordinated efforts help to maximise enhancements of water environments across the region. Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) Partnerships are inclusive collectives, civil society-led initiatives hosting government, local authorities, water companies, and relevant environmental organisations (eNGOs), businesses and more.

CaBA Partnerships operate across over 100 river catchments in England and Wales<sup>4</sup> and their aim is to integrate policy with practice to facilitate broad understanding, adaptation, and action to tackle environmental concerns. These Partnerships directly support the achievement of a number of targets set out in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, and vision to improve all English waterbodies to achieve Good Ecological Status under the Water Framework Directive and adopted into the Environment Act.

The four regional Catchment Partnerships supported are:


- Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership (BACP) co-hosted by Wessex Water and West of England Rural Network (WERN)
- Dorset Catchment Partnerships: Poole Harbour and Stour (DCP) co-hosted by Wessex Water and Dorset Wildlife Trust
- Hampshire Avon Catchment Partnership (HACP) hosted by Wessex Rivers Trusts (WRT)
- Somerset Catchment Partnership (SCP) hosted by Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West (FWAG SW)

<sup>4</sup> Catchment Based Approach (CaBA), [Home - CaBA \(catchmentbasedapproach.org\)](https://www.catchmentbasedapproach.org)



Details of the level of annual funding and the total committed over AMP7 is illustrated in Figure 7 - Catchment Partnership funding during AMP7.

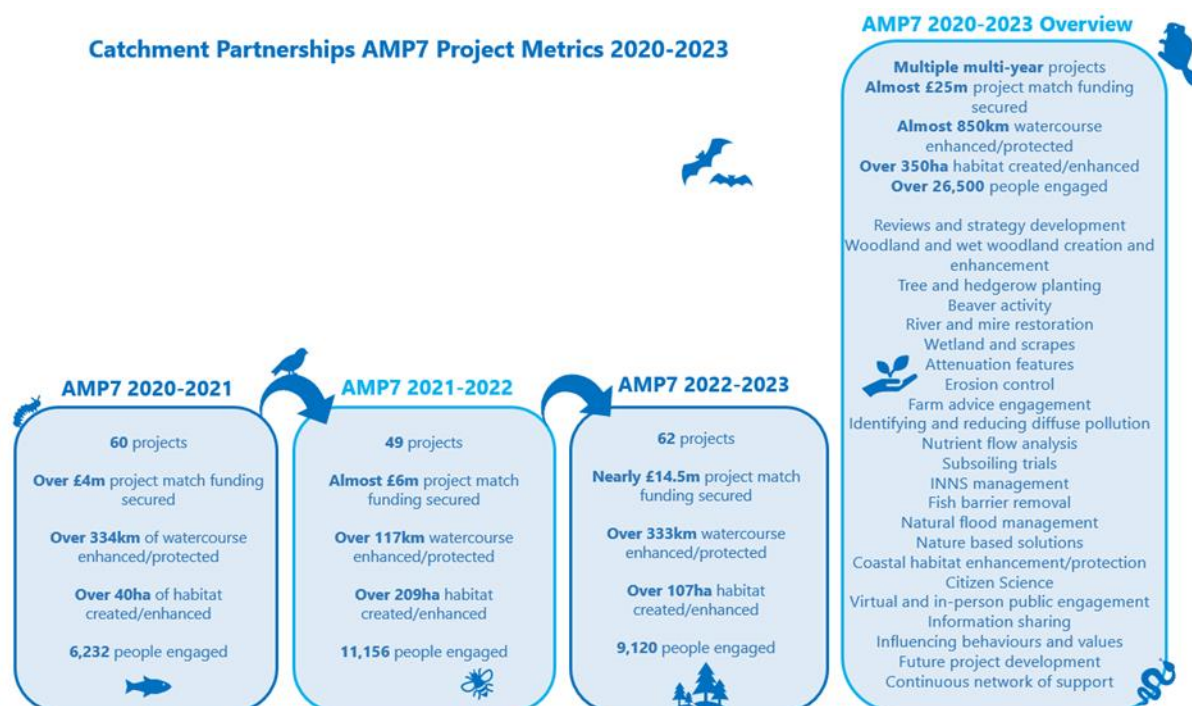
Figure 7 - Catchment Partnership funding during AMP7

 Catchment Partnerships	Annual Funding	Total AMP7 2020-2025
Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership	£80,000	£400,000
Dorset Catchment Partnerships	 £110,000	£550,000
Hampshire Avon Catchment Partnership	£10,000	£50,000
Somerset Catchment Partnership	£10,000	£50,000
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>£210,000</b>	<b>£1,050,000</b> 

The Dorset DCPs receive £70,000 annually, and the Stour receive £40,000 annually.

Tangible, quantifiable metrics are reported annually via annual Catchment Based Approach (CaBA)<sup>5</sup> data returns and illustrated in Figure 8 - Catchment Partnership funding and benefits summary to date, below. This provides details of the match funding sourced beyond that provided by Wessex Water and the aggregated natural capital metrics recorded across all four Partnerships during the first three financial years of the AMP.

Figure 8 - Catchment Partnership funding and benefits summary to date



### 1.1.5 Co-funded Third-party Projects

In AMP7, Wessex Water are co-funding the following six third party projects to complement natural capital enhancement work being undertaken in-house and in partnership at a catchment level across the Wessex region. This funding contributes to the work of local authorities and Wildlife Trusts to facilitate and secure consistent coordination of projects and ongoing natural capital improvements.




<sup>5</sup> Catchment Based Approach (CaBA), [Home - CaBA \(catchmentbasedapproach.org\)](http://Home - CaBA (catchmentbasedapproach.org))

Each project engages a range of wider partners, furthers the understanding of public interest, and helps to deliver both statutory and wider holistic goals for nature protection, recovery, enhancement, and public engagement with nature. The annual funding for each project here cumulatively exceeds the £15,000 per AMP (commitment required by the PC) and ensures continuation and expansion of projects:

- WaterSpace led by Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES)
- West of England Nature Partnership
- Wiltshire Local Nature Partnership led by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
- Somerset Local Nature Partnership led by Somerset Wildlife Trust
- Dorset Local Nature Partnership led by Dorset Wildlife Trust
- Dorset Coast Forum led by Dorset Council.

Details of the funding for these projects on an annual basis and the total for the AMP is illustrated in Figure 9 - Co-funded projects annual and total funding commitment during AMP7.

Figure 9 - Co-funded projects annual and total funding commitment during AMP7

 Projects	Annual Funding	Total AMP7 2020-2025
WaterSpace	£3,750	£18,750
West of England Nature Partnership	£15,000	£75,000
Wiltshire Local Nature Partnership	£10,000	£30,000
Somerset Local Nature Partnership	£10,000	£50,000
Dorset Local Nature Partnership	£10,000	£50,000
Dorset Coast Forum	 £2,000, £10,000, £15,000	 £57,000
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>£63,750*</b>	<b>£280,750</b>

\*Dorset Coast Forum received £2,000 in 2020-2021, £10,000 in 2021-2022, and £15,000 in 2022-2023, and will receive £15,000 in 2023-2024 and £15,000 2024-2025.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust receive £10,000 per year for 3 years from 2022 for a Local Nature Partnership.

This total Annual Funding figure reflects the sum of funding in the latter, most recent half of AMP7, 2022-2025.

The financial contributions provided by Wessex Water have pump-primed wider environmental delivery through these partnerships. A diverse range of natural capital benefits have been delivered through these more disparate projects, including:

Table 1 below highlights some of the environmental benefits delivered by these projects as part of this PC. These are just representative highlights rather than an exhaustive list.

Table 1 - Summary of third-party projects and natural capital highlights delivered between 2020 and 2023

Project Name	Natural Capital Benefits
WaterSpace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Innovative approach of the WaterSpace study earned recognition of one of the top 8 projects in the UK to improve the natural environment</li> <li>Established a 10km long greenway through the centre of Bath to improve connectivity and encourage wellness, physical activity, and access to the city</li> </ul>
West of England Nature Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved the quality of the urban runoff flowing through the SSSI at Nailsea, Tickenham and Kenn Moor</li> <li>Engaged 150 people, welcoming them to Triodos Bank to collaborate on nature's recovery in the West of England</li> </ul>
Wiltshire Local Nature Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worked with landowners to deliver biodiversity gains, which can be accredited to provide developers with requisite biodiversity units, enabling development to take place</li> <li>Managed 35 projects to improve public spaces and provide economic advancements</li> </ul>
Somerset Local Nature Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projects to support Great white egrets in Somerset - 37 breeding pairs were recorded in 2022</li> <li>Managed over 2 million eels being put back into nature reserves</li> <li>Contributed a total of 67Ha of peatland restored</li> </ul>
Dorset Local Nature Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hosted a Young Journalist programme, providing journalism skills for eleven 14–18-year-olds tasked with a focus on raising awareness of climate and ecological emergency</li> <li>Facilitated the Health &amp; Nature Dorset (HAND) programme delivering a wide range of activities, including yoga and Tai Chi in parks, forest bathing, pony handling, arts in nature, wellbeing walks in nature reserves, and archaeological walks</li> <li>Hosting the Low Carbon Dorset Panel assessing large scale projects which have reduced carbon emissions by nearly 4,000 tonnes/year</li> </ul>
Dorset Coast Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented 43 eco-moorings to support marine conservation efforts</li> <li>Via the Sustainable Swanage Project lead mini 'bioblitz' at 3 local school sites, assemblies &amp; class sessions with over 300 children</li> <li>Large-scale community art project: Flooding Swanage with Art, to improve awareness of the wave barriers for the visually impaired</li> </ul>

## 1.2 Summary

To date, Wessex Water has met the PC target by financially supporting the required number of partnership projects detailed in the Methodology and illustrated in Table 2 - Performance Commitment target for number of projects supported annually and number delivered **Error! Reference source not found.** below. This shows a range of between 29 and 37 projects to be supported with a mix between WINEP and Non-WINEP projects. WINEP projects were excluded from Year 1 as these required a minimum 12-month period to establish the farm and land manager engagement process in order that natural capital benefits could commence. The number of projects

delivered, as approved by the Catchment Panel, has also been provided between 2020 and 2023, in the final row of the table.

Table 2 - Performance Commitment target for number of projects supported annually and number delivered

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>PC Target</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>
WINEP Projects*	0	8	8	8	7
Non-WINEP Projects	29	29	29	29	30
TOTAL (WINEP + Non-WINEP)	29	37	37	37	37
<b>Actual Projects delivered</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>42</b>	-	-

\*WINEP Projects do not quality for over/under performance payments.

The total level of Wessex Water funding for these projects is £6.2m to date, 2020-2023.

Examples of natural capital benefits derived from Wessex Water partnership projects include:

- Over 3,500m<sup>3</sup> flood storage created by BAP Partners Programme Projects
- Almost £25m project match funding secured between 2020-2025 reported through the Catchment Partnerships
- Over 30,000 people directly or indirectly engaged with supported projects
- Over 1,000 wider projects headed by these Wessex Water partners
- Influencing environmental policy, guidance, and investment
- Influencing attitude and behaviour change for environmental improvement
- Contributing to regional knowledge and data sharing.

This document communicates the challenges of reporting on the impact and benefits of partnership working; collating both quantitative and qualitative information and balancing data derived from annual reports with personal experience. The scope, range and amount of information should be celebrated as it exemplifies the volume and quantity of positive work underway to improve the environment across the region. Without Wessex Water's support and facilitation much of this would not have happened or would have happened much more slowly.